

Letter from a Member of the
Commission of the late General Assembly, to a Minister
in the Country;

CONCERNING

Present Dangers.

R. D. SIR,

THE late General Assembly of this National Church, having appointed their Commission, to take Care, that it suffer no prejudice, I have attempted both for their Exoneration at present, and also for their Future Approbation, by your Commissioners to the Ensuing Assembly, by this Letter, to acquaint You of the Diligence and Endeavours, used by them with the Representatives of Our Nation, for Securing the Present Establishment, Rights and Privileges of this Church: As also, to tell You of the Success and Reception these Applications have received. And lastly, I shall presume to tell You what I judge to be Required of You, under these present Circumstances of this Church.

Beside the General Address made by Them to the High Court of Parliament, for Settling the Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government of the Church; they did, in Following Addresses, in Pursuance of the Design of that, lay before their Lordships several Particulars: Such as, That

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no Oath, Bond or Test, of any kind, shall be required of any Minister, or Member of this Church; which are inconsistent with the Known Principles thereof.

In Answer thereto, I cannot; but with all Gratitude, and knowledge, That the Parliament has passed an Act, for Securing the Protestant Religion, and Presbyterian Church Government; which is insert in, and Ratified by their Act, Ratifying and Approving the Treaty of Union of the Two Kingdoms of Scotland and England: By which Act it is expressly Statute and Declared, That none of the Subjects of this Kingdom shall be liable to, but all and every one of them, for ever free of any Oath, Test or Subscription, within this Kingdom, contrary to, or inconsistent with the foresaid True Protestant Religion, and Presbyterian Church Government. But only it is not Determined, who shall judge, when Publiſk Oaths shall be imposed, whether they be inconsistent with these; or not.

And also, it was Represented, That in the Coronation Oath to be taken by the Sovereigns of Great Britain, They be engaged to maintain the Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government of this Church, and the Rights and Privileges thereof, as now by Law established.

In Answer thereto, by the same Act, it is Statute and Declar'd, That after the Decease of her Present Majesty, whom God long preserve, the Sovereign Succeeding to Her in the Royal Government of this Kingdom, shall in all time coming, at His or Her Accession to the Crown, Swear and Subscribe, that they shall Maintain and Preserve the foresaid Settlement of the true Protestant Religion, with the Government, Worship, and Discipline of this Church, as above Established Inviolable: But only it is not Determined by whom the said Oath, on the part of Scotland, shall be Administrat.

It was also Represented to their Lordships, That the Sacramental Test being the Condition of Access to places of Trust, all of our Communion must be debarr'd from the same, if not in Scotland; Yet throw the rest of the Dominion of Britain, which may prove of most Dangerous Consequence to this Church.



In Answer to which, when a Clause was offered, for Exceeming Scots-Men from taking that Test, to be added to the abovementioned Act of Securitie in these Terms. viz: And that they shall be Capable of any Office, Civil or Militarie; and to Receiue any Grant, Gift or Right, and to have Command or Place of Trust, from and under the Sovereign, within any part of Great Britain. The said Clause, by a Solemn Vote of Parliament, was Refused to be added: And to Express and Ascertain the meaning of that Vote by an other; the following Clause was likewise refused to be added to the Eighteen Article of Union. viz: That all Scotsmen be Exceem'd from the English Sacramental Test, not only in Scotland, but in all Places of the united Kingdom, and Dominions thereunto belonging, and that they be Declared Capable of Offices throughout the whole, without being Obligated to take the said Test.

And that it might Evidently appear, not only that no Scots Presbyterian should be capable to Enjoy any place in England: But also, that the greatest Enemies to Presbytrie among the English Church, who deny the Lawfulness of our Ministers Ordination, should be capable to Enjoy any place within Scotland. The following Clause was by another Solemn Vote of Parliament. Refused to be added to the 22d. Article of Union. viz. And furdur it is agreed, that so long as that part of the 2d. Act, anno 25. Ch: 2d. Appoining a Sacramental Test shall stand and continue in Force in England, all Persons in publick Trust, Civil or Military, within the Limites of Scotland, shall Swear and Sign the following Formula. viz. J. A. B. Do Sincerely and Solemnly, Declare in the Presence of GOD, that I own the Preebyterian Government of the Church, as by Law Established in Scotland, to be a Lawful Government of the Church; and that I shall never directly nor indirectly Endeavour the Subversion thereof.

Likewise, it was humbly Represented, that in the second part of the Oath of Abjuration in Favour, of the Succession in the Protestant Line, there is Reference made to several Acts of the English Parliament, which every one in this Nation, who may be obliged to take the said Oath, may not so well know; and

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therefore cannot Swear with Judgement: As also, that there seemed to be some qualifications required in the Successor to the Crown, which are not suitable to our Principles.

In Answer to which, I Received this account; that the Parliament did Refuse to add the following Clause, for clearing the word Limitation, (the Rise of the Scruple,) viz: Likeas, it is declared, that by the word Limitation in the Oath mentioned in the 22d. Article, is only understood Intail of the Succession, and not the conditions of Government upon the Successor; and that all Persons of Scotland who may be Lyable to take the said Oath, Swear it in that sence only; by which Refusal, it seems not clear to me; but that the Swearers are now to maintain and own, that the Successor shall be of the Communion of the Church of England, as a condition and Burden upon him; and that over and above his being Protestant.

And further, it was laid before the Parliament, in case this proposed Treaty of Union shall be Concluded, this Nation will be Subjected in its civil interests to a British Parliament, wherein twenty six Prelates are to be Constituent Members and Legislators; and lest the Commission's silence should have been Constructed to import their Consent to, or approbation of the Civil places and Power of Churchmen; they did in all Humilitie, and with due Respect to his Grace and Lordships, Represent, that it is Contrarie to their known Principles and Covenants, that any Church-Man should bear Civil Offices, or have Power in the Common-wealth.

As to which Representation and Testimony, I know no other Answer Returned, than what was given by the Vote approving of the Treaty of Union!

The Commission did also Represent, that in case the Proposed Union be Concluded, the Church would suffer prejudice, unless there be a Commission of Parliamen- for Plantation of Kirks, and Valuation of Tiends; and a Judicature in Scotland, Established for Executing the Laws and Judging Causes, which formerly were done by the Privy Council.

But all the Answer I hear they Received, was by approving

ing the tenth Article of the Union, wherein its only declared that the Queens Majesty and her Royal Successors, if they please, may continue a Privy Council in Scotland for preserving of publick Peace and Order, until the Parliament of Great Britain shall think fit to alter it. But there is no mention nor Provision made for any Court to plant Kirks and value Tiends. And it is the Opinion of some great Lawiers, that albeit the Parliament should now grant any such Commission after the Treaty is Concluded, the same can last no longer then the first of May next, at which time the Union Commenceeth, unless the Parliament of Great Britain shall think fit to Renew the same. For no Commission of Parliament can subsist after the meeting of that Parliament, which Granted the power, comes to be but Dissolved; and far less can it subsist, after the very being of that and all other Scots Parliaments, become for ever Extinguished.

By the Commissions last Address, it was Represented, that the passing of an Act of Ratification, of this Article of the Treatie of Union, with the following Clause: *Declaring nevertheless, that the Parliament of England may provide for the Security, of the Church of England; as they shall think Expedient to take place within the Bounds of the said Kingdom of England, and not Derogating from the Security above provided, For Establishing the Church of Scotland, within the Bounds of this Kingdom: Which shall not Suspend nor Derogate from the force, and effect of this present Ratification, but shall be understood as here Included, without any Necessity of any new Ratification, in the Parliament of Scotland.* Which Clause, they said, seemed to them, not only to be like a blank, put, with his Grace and their Lordships Consent, in the hands of the English Parliament, to Enact what they shall think fit, for Securing the Hierarchie, and Ceremonies of their Church: But also a consent that it be an Article and Fundamental of the Union, and as is Contained in their Ratification, could not but imply a manifest Homologation. They did therefore Humbly Be-

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seech that High Court, that there might be no such Stipulation or consent, as they would not involve themselves and the Nation in Guilt, and as they Consulted the Peace, and quiet thereof, both in Church and State.

But instead of Expunging that Clause, as an Answer to their Humble Petition, and faithful Testimony they did Instantly approve of the Act Ratifying the Treaty of Union, and thereafter the same Immediately Received the Royal Assent. Whereby I do think it is now as it were Stipulated, that *England* shall never be Capable of being further Reformed, which is as unnecessary, as it is an avowed flying in face of the Covenant.

I do also further acquaint you, that albeit the Commission of the General Assembly did by their Representation to this Parliament anno 1703, Declare, that the Enacting of a Toleration in Favours of Prelatists, would be to Establish Iniquity by a Law; yet by the Articles of Union, there is no Provision made against the same, so that I do fear a Toleration in their Favours is now unavoidable.

Further, in Respect this Parliament hath not Declared, as by the Twenty fifth Article they might have done, what particular Laws and Statutes of this Kingdom, are inconsistent with, or Contrarie to the Terms of the Articles of Union; I do therefore fear, that the *English*, or with the mixture of 61 Members for *Scotland*, the *British* Parliament may declare what Laws or Customes they please, now used among us, to be void and Null, as inconsistent with the Articles of the Treaty, which may Render that which we Esteem our Security, most insecure.

Seeing the Ecclesiastical Supremacie claim'd some times by the Sovereigns of this Land, was such an Encroachment on the Prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ, the alone King and Head of his Church, and had such bad Consequences, and is now so happily Rescinded: Albeit it was Humbly Intreated by the Commission, in a Memorial to Her Majesty's Servants, and several Noble and Worthy Members of Parliament,

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flament, that all possible Security be provided against the Reassuming of it in after time; yet the Motion was intirely Neglected, and nothing done therein.

And now, R. and D. Sir. I cannot shun to tell you from what hath falln out at this time, that I fear the Peace and quiet, if not the present Legal Establishment of this Church, may be in imminent Danger: And therefore, as the Commission did by their Act on the 14. of *October* last, most Earnestly Recommend it to all the Lords Ministers and People, that they would make Application to God by Serious Prayer, and Supplication for his Direction, and Assistance to the High Court of Parliament, that they might be Enabled to bring that Great and Weighty Affair of the Treaty betwixt the two Kingdoms, then in dependence, to a happy Issue, for his own Glory, and the good of his Church; So it is my Humble Oppinion now, that the Ministers and all the Lords People within your bounds, should continue instant in Prayer to God, that he would Mercifully disappoint our fears, and the hopes and Endeavours of all our secret or professed Enemies.

In the next place, when I consider the Disposition of the People, in many parts, to be most averse from this Union; they having expressed themselves broadly enough against it, wishing that some Stop might have been put to it's Concluding: But it being now concluded by the Parliament, I do look upon it as our Duty, according to the Commission's late Letter to Presbyteries; That as Ministers have, in their Stations, Access, they would discountenance and discourage all Irregularities and Tumults, that tend to Disturb the Government of Our Gracious Sovereign, the Queen.

In the next place, According to the Synod's their Appointments to Presbyteries, about *November 1792*, when they considered the great Affair of the Union of the Two Kingdoms, then under Deliberation; they did, for mutual Edification.

Edification, and strengthening one anothers hands in the LORD's Work, appoint each Minister and Probationer, judicially in their Respective Presbyteries, to Profess and Declare their Resolutions and Engagements, to maintain, by GOD's Grace, the True Doctrine of this Church, according to Our Confession of Faith, and the Purity of Worship, Discipline, and Presbyterian Government of this Church, founded on the Word of GOD; and that they promise to disown all Principles contrar thereto. I do wish, that on this occasion, that same Profession and Engagement were again renewed, and Recorded in the Books of the Respective Presbyteries.

And lastly, D. Sir, Considering that Our Lord and Master expects and requires of His Ministers, that they should in a special manner make it their Business, to promote the Peace and Welfare of His Church, at all times; but more especially at this, when it is the most probable, if not only Mein now left, for preserving our happy Establishment. Therefore I do humbly beseech You, to use Your Moyer, so to get these dispos'd and directed, your Presbytrie does Commission to the Approaching General Assembly, on whose Conduct and Actings, the Peace or Disquiet of this Church will very much depend: That they would avoid every thing that may breed Division among Our selves, and provoke, or give a Handle to others, who may be waiting for our halting, to disturb, and then ruine us: But that they would come with a Design to go on in the ordinary Course, and Method, of prosecuting Ecclesiastical Affairs, and Overtures to be before them. This, I am sure, will tend much to the Strength and Beauty, of this, so much threatned and Reproached Church.

Edr. Jan:
1797.

F. I. N. I. S.

